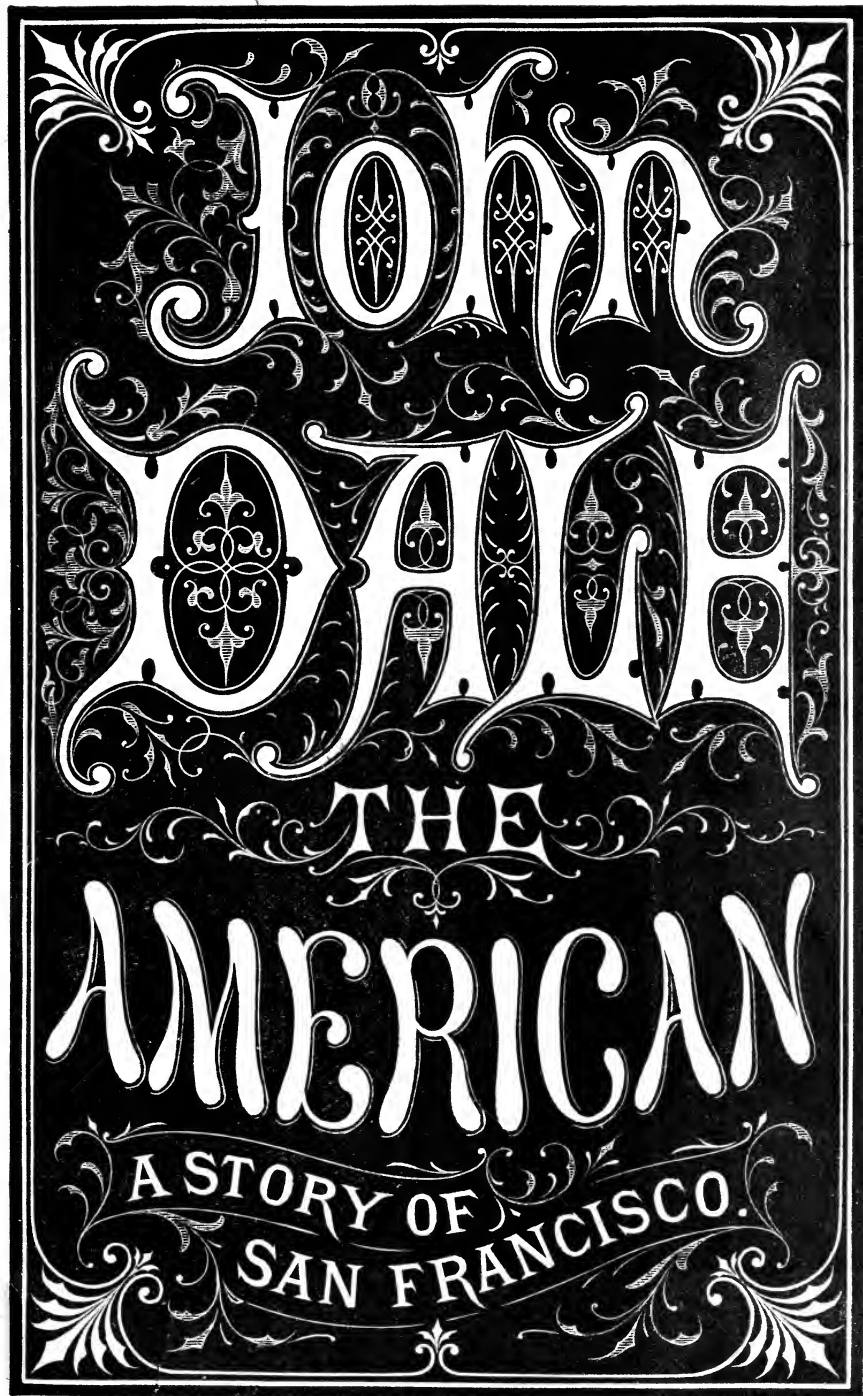


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JOHN DALE

THE AMERICAN.

A STORY

BY

EMAIL JULIAN.

"Content to follow reason and fact, in singleness and honesty of purpose, wherever they may lead, in the sure faith, that a hell of honest men will, to him, be more endurable than a paradise full of angelic shams."

PROF. HUXLEY.

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PREFACE.

The human mind is moved at this epoch by two great incentives. One is to shape all conduct in the manner indicated by the church, so that a more delightful existence can be attained after death. The other is to build up knowledge out of the materials that can be seen, by the exercise of a free mental activity. The first anticipating celestial enjoyments that will last for all eternity, makes, consequently, but little account of the world's progress. The other exerts itself for this world alone, making men wiser, more prosperous in life, modifying the civil laws that oppress them, unfolding the workings of nature, and exhibiting innumerable wonders and beauties hitherto unseen. One of these great incentives has moved and controlled society for many centuries, and has inflicted upon it during that long period a self-constituted gloom, with nothing in recompense but a promise, of whose fulfillment there is not the slightest shadow of certainty. But little more than a single century has elapsed since the other great purpose has come to do its work in the world, and already the substantial benefits it has achieved for mankind are marvels to witness. These two human purposes are antagonistic in principle and effect. They have always waged war with one another. Where one prevails, the other must subside. One destroys what the other feeds on. One is the purely humane sentiment embodied in the inclination to make men hold a more exalted opinion of themselves, and to modify society so that its ills and discomforts shall be reduced to the lowest minimum, and while the other goes about in its conspicuous uniform, administering openly to individual cases of human misery, this, the greater of man's benefactors, moves quietly with its science, and without the least ostentation, down among the roots of human misery, and silences countless groans with its strokes. The God of science and humanity is grand, majestic, silent, and awe-inspiring. Surrounded by laws that never vary, He manifests himself only by them. Men open His great book to gain a knowledge of Him and admire the wonders therein contained, and He rewards them with substantial blessings. The more they study this grand volume, accessible everywhere, the more they are impressed with the power and goodness of its author, and are rejoiced with the intimation that their *temporal* improvement and well-being are objects of His special attention and solicitude.

Just one century ago there was instituted in the world a great enterprise --the American Government. It arose out of the pure sentiment of man's love for his kind. It was suggested by Nature's even and indiscriminating laws. It towers above everything else in its promise of benefit to mankind. It was born outside of the church. The God of humanity is its author, and in the spirit of a belief that the old religion is its most dangerous enemy, this story was written.

EMAIL JULIAN.

SAN FRANCISCO, July 4th, 1876.



JOHN DALE, THE AMERICAN.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

There stands in the City of San Francisco, a large edifice with a towering steeple. It has great gothic windows with massive sills and stained glass panes, and entrance ways leading into aisles and seats under a broad, high ceiling. There is one large picture and a score of lesser ones hanging within, all illustrating a certain story. There is also one large cross and a dozen smaller ones, reminders of the same old story. There are, besides, a font, urns, candlesticks, images, bells and machinery. When the performance begins, men and boys appear in outer garments. Solemn music breaks forth. A voice arises trained into an unearthly intonation, and the result is a highly successful and ingenious combination to incite one of the lowest human faculties—imagination. In the rear of this structure, and connecting with it through a door and alley way, stands a building whose front opens upon another street. Within this building the ceilings are high and blank, and the walls are vacant, save a sorrowful picture here and there. The floors are uncarpeted and the furniture is scanty. The house below stairs has a cold, solemn look. Footsteps echo in the hall, and the voice of whoever speaks within has a hollow reverberation. There is apparent in the surroundings an attempt to convey the semblance of poverty and deprivation. That illusion, however, is immediately dispelled by the reflection that the few articles of furniture in each room, though plain, and without ornamentation, are yet so massive, and of such rare materials as to absorb in their cost the price of a thorough and comfortable outfit for each apartment that contains them. The business transacted in this house is of the most important and serious character, because, as is believed by many, the men here are divinely authorized to instruct us in the methods of saving our souls from eternal suffering; in the doing of which it is indispensable, in accordance with the theory they teach, that we should be put through certain ceremonies with their divinely authorized hands, all of which—a coincidence worthy of note—contribute morally and financially to the permanency and success of their organization.

To an American who has not been abroad, the men who conduct the business of this house present a curious and interesting spectacle. Representing two or three religious orders they are attired in the several unique costumes that distinguish them. Their faces are rubicund and rosy, and express composure and satisfaction. Their bodies have a soft flabby outline. They perform their various ceremonial duties in a kind of mechanical, half unconscious mood that is induced by the unremitted and unchanged nature of the business. Mentally and physically they exhibit the marks of a careless and easy life. In contrast with the busy world that surrounds them, the strain of mind and muscle that prevails in the community in which they live, they appear indolent, droning and slow. Among these seven or eight men are natives of Ireland, Italy, Spain and Mexico, and not a single American. They teach that the rights of conscience and personal liberty we enjoy under our Republic are nothing compared with the eternal joy and happiness they are commissioned of God to secure to us under certain conditions and contracts. In the exercise of free expression and thought, in the avenues of success thrown wide open to merit, in the glorious spectacle of liberty, contentment and happiness, in the easy acquisition of knowledge by a free school system, they can recognize nothing of God.

In the early morning of a day in summer, while the devout were tramping along the street one by one, and disappearing within this edifice to early mass, there came a man running at the top of his speed toward the vestry in the rear. When he had reached the door he pulled the bell violently, took off his hat, and crossed himself. Upon being led into the presence of Father Scully, whom he desired to see, he exclaimed, scant of breath :

"For the love of God, your riverence, Mr. Crippen wishes you to come at once; Mr. Crippen is dying, your riverence; he is took much worse since you were talking with him last evening."

Father Scully seized his hat and went forth quickly, leaving Terrence Finley, the messenger, who, spying a funt of holy water, was determined to take a few precautions for his own well-being, which the solemnity of the occasion and the opportunity of the place suggested. He approached the basin of holy water, and in the absence at that early hour of any critical eye, he put his whole hand in it to the wrist and sprinkled his face and head to the extent of a dripping. Seeing no one about, he put his other hand in and sprinkled the water into his bosom, crossing and recrossing himself, meantime uttering prayers, the sense of which he had either never known, or long since lost. Terrence felt that the fine opportunity he enjoyed might not soon occur again, and he was disposed to make the most of it. So having luxuriated in the precious liquid until the moisture hung in drops upon his eyelids and the end of his nose, he made his way into the street, and hastened to the bedside of Mr. Crippen. Father Scully was already there, and deeply engaged. The rooms of the invalid were in a rather imposing dwelling on the hill-side, not far from the church.

Mr. Crippen's open history of a ten years residence in San Francisco was, that he came into it a poor man, and had achieved great financial suc-

cess as a speculator in mines and their auxiliaries. But Mr. Crippen had a secret history and a story to tell, which to nobody but Father Scully or one of his profession would he ever have divulged. He had told the story months before to Father Scully, and soon after the intimation from his medical attendant that the disease which had fastened itself upon him was likely to terminate his life. During all the time since, he had surrendered himself into the spiritual arms of his confessor, the most devout and penitent of men to him. The secret history of the dying man was no longer a source of annoyance. The holy father had relieved his conscience of that weight, and there had grown out of the intimacy between the priest and penitent, a determination in the latter, to make the greatest possible atonement for the chief sinful and criminal act of his life. The *amende* which was so materially to brighten the penitent's prospects beyond the grave, was an endowment to the church of the whole of his large estate, to be expended in a certain manner dictated by himself. There were two acts, however, yet to be accomplished vitally affecting the interests of the contracting parties. One was the bestowing on Mr. Crippen the sacrament of extreme unction, and the other the getting his signature, with witnesses, to his will. The desire of getting through with these in good time before the breath had gone out of Mr. Crippen's body, had sent the Rev. Father in a rather undignified haste to the sick man's couch. The symptoms of Mr. Crippen had indeed taken a very serious turn since the evening previous, at which time he had calmly talked with his confessor on matters spiritual and the business appertaining to his bequest. The eye of the priest was quick to observe that the sick man was rapidly sinking into the dark valley.

"My faithful son," said he, "the sign of your approaching glory is manifest, and the greatest heavenly act of your life must be hastily accomplished. Let it be done at once while your hand has the power."

After kissing the sick man's cheek, and placing a small crucifix to his almost nerveless lips, Father Scully led Terrence to the door and was directing him with great anxiety to call up some of the lodgers of the house to serve as an associate witness to Mr. Crippen's signature. At this moment, John Dale, who occupied a room of the building, made his appearance in the hall on his way passing out into the street, and the priest, in his extremity, solicited him to enter the dying man's apartment and perform the important service required. When Father Scully returned to the apartment with his companion, the light had gone out of Mr. Crippen's eyes, and the death rattle was in his throat. The small soft voice of a woman, in the garb of a Sister, uttering an earnest prayer on his behalf, kneeling at the bedside, he did not seem to hear, and the crucifix had fallen from his hand. The priest in a paroxysm of desperation seized the important document laying near, and, inking a pen, placed it in the limber hand of the unconscious man, and, guiding it, wrote the name of William Crippen in its allotted space on the will. Then passing the paper quickly to Dale, with an air of authority, he had the satisfaction of seeing that young man in a nervous and oblivious way append his signature as a subscribing witness without apparent hesitation. To John Dale the solemnity and impressiveness of this scene, to

which he had been ushered so unexpectedly, was so overwhelming that for a time he was unable to reflect upon his acts, and he went forth out of the room before the remembrance of it gave him any inquietude of mind. Terrence, the late Mr. Crippen's attendant, arose from his knees when all signs of life had gone from his employer, with a double load of woe, for great as was the sorrow at his master's death, there appeared to him also, a great disaster in calling John Dale to sign the will. In excitement and tears he exclaimed :

"Will your riverence ask the Lord for my forgiveness. I should have found the occasion to tell you that the man who is just gone out is of an unholy character. The devil sent him here, your riverence, to put his name beside your own and Mr. Crippen's on the paper. There lays Mr. Crippen dead with all your blessings on his soul, and his will upon the table has the mark of bad luck upon the face of it." Saying which, Terrence burst into a fit of wailing.

"The witness is not a son of the church, I suppose," said the priest with indifference.

"I was seeking the Lord's displeasure, your riverence, when I saw him take the pen and did not tell you where I saw him the last Lord's Day, and the company he was in the midst of, the very hour your riverence was preaching the word of God."

"Carousing in drink, I suppos," said the priest.

"The devil saved him for a worse sin than that. For as our Saviour is looking down upon us with the soul of Mr. Crippen in his arms, I saw him, your riverence, in a procession with the Masons, an apron tied about his waist, and he was carrying the devils emblem of a square and compass."

"Terrence," said Father Scully, thoughtfully, "go at once to lawyer Rood; tell him that Mr. Crippen is dead, and that I wait for him."

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CHAPTER II.

When John Dale had recovered himself sufficiently to reflect that the act he had just performed was of doubtful character, every regret was buried for the time by a sentiment he could not suppress. The beautiful upturned face and streaming eyes of the young Sister of Charity whom he saw kneeling at the death-bed appeared to him lovely beyond anything he had ever seen. The delicate white hands placed together in the attitude of prayer. The earnest, yet calm and intellectual expression, the simple costume, the place, the purpose, all served to make the scene appear to him as something beyond the world, in its entrancing and angelic loveliness. His purpose of coming from his room at so early an hour on that morning when he was intercepted by Father Scully, was to enjoy a sea bath beyond the suburbs, on the beach. It had been his custom for a long time to leave his bed thus early. Increased vigor of body and mind was the result, but had the performance been of no mental and physical benefit whatever he would have gone through it on account of the genuine pleasure it gave him. The earliness of the hour gave an agreeable quiet to that portion of the suburbs along which lay his path, and the sun near the horizon reflecting upon the tranquil Bay of San Francisco with the grand landscape of Mount Tamalpais and its companions on the opposite shore, were a never failing feast to his eyes. To each day of business duty these morning excursions were such an evening commingling of pleasure with toil, that his life was a hopeful one and full of vigor. The independent habit of thought to which he was accustomed, was fostered by this inclination to commune with the grand and beautiful in nature. By reading much and reflecting deeply, he had become possessed with certain convictions, that each day's added meditation fixed more firmly in his mind. The incident of his serving as a witness to the will had given an impulse to his thoughts on this morning in a direction they had often taken before. He saw that Mr. Crippen, a man of great wealth, had taken refuge in the church, and shut himself from the world, and that he had died strangely, unattended with relatives if he had any. There was no doubt in his mind from the interest manifested by the priest, that the deceased had bequeathed his wealth to the church, and that in consideration it would undertake some extraordinary performances in behalf of his departed soul. The church, thought he, will perform a series of periodical invocations that will extend over time enough to allow his spirit to escape safely its pretended Purgatorial delays, and this, and other like acts of cultivated and designing skill to add to its material wealth, he held no less a crime of the church on account of the antiquity of its committal, nor less to be deprecated because the long dark ages of ignorance and superstition had submitted so tamely to its perpetration. But out of these rancorous and better thoughts of the Catholic Church he came at times to dwell on that angelic face and form whose image

in so short period was deeply graven on his heart. He had unthinkingly subscribed to the regularity of a will that was neither legal nor valid, and the sweet innocent one had looked on in approval. The voice of conscience whispered to him that the act he had done was an evil one, but the desperate and unreasonable impulse of his heart obscured it with the sense of its having been done entirely to her liking.

While strolling along, his mind wrapt by times in the celestial-like image and the probable provisions of the ill he had witnessed, he came down at last among the shells and pebbles of his bathing place. Disrobing himself, he went breasting his way into the water with a feeling of exhilarated enjoyment. The tide was running out, and the water coming down from the warmer districts of the interior gave a genial glow to the bath, otherwise rather cold in any season for popular resort. There being an unusual agreeableness in the temperature of the water he swam far out into the running tide, splashing and diving with an abandon induced by the feeling of being unseen and alone. He was surprised and quieted in the midst of his gyrations by the sight of a companion swimmer nude as himself. The man came floating toward him with the tide. Dale called to him without response, and swimming to him he saw that the face was partly submerged in the water, and that the body had the rolling, lifeless motion of a floating log. The man was dead, and curiosity led him to scrutinize the features. At a glance of the face he was startled with a discovery. He appeared to see the same pale, pinched, dead features that he had looked upon an hour before. All that he had seen of Mr. William Crippen's body lying there on his death-bed, his nose, mouth, chin, hair, and the configuration of his head and shoulders were apparently floating beside him. He held the dead face toward him and gazed upon and studied it. Unable, owing to the force of the tide, to bring the corpse ashore, he relinquished his hold. With its face turned heavenward it passed slowly through the Golden Gate into the broad ocean, and donning his apparel, John Dale made his way in great perplexity toward the city. His mind, out of the events of the morning, was beset by two striking images, each with its train of reflection. He had seen a rugged life go out. A soul depart into the depths, and a young, fresh budding and no doubt beautiful soul illuminating the way for it and sending out her spiritual light over the verge and into the abyss. Growing out of the scenes that he had lately witnessed, an impulse of charity was walling up within him, and the sentimentality of his mood was called into practical working service by an incident on his way. A little before him, on the wayside, as he entered the suburbs, he saw a man struggling in convulsions. The sufferer was a person of rough exterior. His extremities were drawn up. His hands were clenched with such rigidity that the finger nails were cutting into the palms. His countenance at no time pleasing or attractive, was drawn by spasmodic contortion into an unhuman shape. Dale hastened to him, got down beside him and chafed his limbs, obtained some water, bathed his face and head with it, and gave him some to drink. The man after a time recovered, raised himself into a sitting posture, looked

bewildered and frightened at Dale, crossed himself a number of times and remarked:

"Applepsy fits; had 'em before; felt 'em coming." Rising to his feet he seized Dale by the hand.

"Put it there, sir, I mightn't 'a come out of it without your help, and a bad go it would a been for me if I hadn't." While saying this his hand grasped that of Dale with an unsteady, nervous motion of the fingers, and their scaly hardness and coldness so nearly resembled the sensation of a coiling snake as to make him shudder. The man picked up a small package wrapped in paper that had fallen to the ground beside him and trudged along with a slouching gait in company with Dale, who delayed his natural pace that he might see the invalid, who was somewhat limp and exhausted, safe back to the city. The man's apparent nervousness and dread of evil led him to keep constantly hold of his companion's hand as though he felt an assurance of safety in so doing. Such being the conduct to be expected of one who had so recently suffered an attack of epilepsy, Dale was inclined to pity him the more for this aberration of his senses, and he was induced, also, on this account to permit such liberties of manner that under other conditions he would have endeavored to escape.

"I'm a fellow creature with a very good heart, and I wouldn't hurrit a hair of your head," said he by way of encouragement as he observed that Dale in spite of himself was exhibiting an aversion to so close a contact.

"But," he continued, "no matter how good a fellow creature's heart is he can't keep a fighting off the devil every minute. Now you press my hand tight. There's a ringing of bells. Don't you hear 'em?"

"I can hear no bells, my poor fellow."

"They're for me, them bells is, and they're a warnin. Them bells is a tellin me I'll have another fit. They're tellin me to go to the church. Them's gospel bells."

The man hurried along with the greatest speed that his strength would permit, and, arriving after a time opposite the church which has been mentioned, he halted."

"A man," said he, "as can go out of his way to assist a fellow creature in one thing, can assist that same fellow creature in another thing, which is to stow this ere packet away in your trunk until such a time as I need it."

Dale took the package in accordance with the request, and giving the man his name and address parted with him. The man went straight to the listening box within the church. A little more than a year before this man had gone to confession in the same place. Then, as now, the devout impulse was engendered by an attack of his malady. As often as these calamities befel him he was reminded that his soul was unfitted for its long journey. In the intervals of immunity from his disease such serious reflections went almost entirely out of his mind. What he revealed on this occasion to his confessor, Father Scully we have no right to know. Before long, however, we shall claim the privilege of surmising.

CHAPTER III.

The building known as the Harp stood over the water on a narrow street of San Francisco, and although but a few years had passed since its erection it had the rottenness of a century in its appearance. The house was sprung, warped and twisted so that there was not a right angle in its corners, nor a true perpendicular in its sides. Its decayed supports had settled here and there in the mud, until the floors had an undulating shape, as though by long standing over the waves they had taken an impression of them. The street fronting this building was twisted out of a level by the settling timbers beneath, and was torn into holes and chasms through which were exposed to view at low tide, surrounded by slime and ooze, the debris of many a load of refuse, consisting of broken utensils, fractured household ornaments, and here and there, partially imbedded in the mud, the worm-eaten skeletons of a small boat or two that had passed out of service and were gradually being hidden by the wash of the tide. There was nothing so regular about the Harp as the rising and falling of the water beneath its rotten slime-coated beams. It came up with its slow procession of ghastly blown animal carcasses and garbage floating upon its surface, and then receded, leaving a glossy ooze, when the vapors of putrefication steamed through the crevices and holes above, until all the atmosphere, and every absorbent substance about, and in the Harp were impregnated with an intolerable essence and flavor of rottenness. The curse of dinginess lurked in the air, and every bright thing was tarnished by the vapor that arose out of the foundation below.

All along and opposite, the buildings had the same lame and superannuated aspect. The street in the vicinity, like the leaf of an antiquated and ill-used volume, bore its lines of reading matter in the weather-worn and dust-covered signs that told the story of a commercial business which flourished there once, and in short suggestive sentences related in brief the business history of many a pioneer. There was a time once when this planked street over the water bore the weight of many heavy loads of merchandise coming into store from the ships near by, and going out again to ready purchasers of the country inland; but at this time no vehicle entered upon the unsafe and treacherous thoroughfare. The locality for all that was neither silent nor without inhabitants, for by slow transition, as one by one the venders of heavy goods removed to more stable and convenient quarters of the town, there came into the district a class well contented to live there, who were attracted, principally by the greatly reduced rents.

There was a striking similarity of kind in the dwellers of this district, for there was scarcely one who was not a native of that land whose emblem did honor in brilliant green over the door of the Harp. From being educated abroad these people were in possession of a good deal of knowledge, such as most Americans are grossly ignorant of, for there was not a man or woman among them but could tell at an asking the feast and fast days of nearly



every saint in the calendar ; nor was there one who could not recite the miracle working wonders of these same old saints with a credulity and relish that attested the industry of their teachers. It was to be noted, however, as a lesson to profit by in the study of the science of instruction, that neither their well-grounded knowledge of the saints, nor their thoroughly instilled information of the intricate process of getting to Heaven by the church formula, prevented them from going into paroxysms, of getting noisy together at times, and of contributing to a lively business at police quarters. But whatever acrimonious differences might have arisen in the Harp, it was observed that questions of a theological character never disturbed it, for no greater uniformity of religious belief could possibly have existed ; and among such zealous defenders of the faith, any reformer who might have had the temerity to express a dissenting religious opinion, must have done so at the imminent risk of going headforemost through one of the many man-holes which abounded thereabout.

The demand for secular literature was notably small in the Harp, and was to be accounted for by the fact that there had been little enough time to put its inhabitants through the evolutions of church discipline, and none to waste by their instructors in imparting such unimportant accomplishments as are taught in secular schools. But if the Harp was restrained from the influence of irreverent literature, and denied the contamination of modern science, there was yet an intuitive knowledge which pervaded it that may be considered a very remarkable instance of inborn genius. The intuitive faculty of the Harp was the skill of its people in solving every difficult problem in the science of American politics at short notice, and of entering into the spirit and business of American popular elections with an aptitude that anything but the possession of a remarkable genius utterly fails to explain. Conscious of its gifts, the Harp always arrayed itself in full force to settle the perplexing differences that were constantly arising in American politics, and it was to be observed that its people went out to battle in the same ranks, that they marched under one political party banner, and that with a most singular homogeneity of opinion they never got politically divided. Upon all questions of public policy, where the Harp could serve even in the remotest degree, its theological superiors, it never flinched ; neither could it be diverted or cajoled into a mistake of political sides ; but in the matter of an election, where personal and local issues were alone to be passed upon, it was often seen to waver in the fight until warmed up to steady earnest work by the appearance of some generous candidate for political honors and emoluments.

It was under the roof of the Harp that the celebrated Backwhacker Club was organized to do the State service. This club, or as might have been said in the season of its highest activity, this promiscuous assortment of clubs, served many valuable purposes ; for besides giving strength by its unity, and establishing a higher market value for its services by aggregation, it obviated the necessity of the labor and trouble of interviewing the candidate by each individual member, to discover his fitness for the position sought for, and allowed all the interviewing to be done in a bunch by the presiding officer of

the club, who was thus enabled to judge at once by the material and tangible result of his conference under whose banner to battle. It was a misfortune of the Backwhacker Club that no matter whether victory or defeat came to it, the Harp was in either case immediately thereafter strewn all over with the prostrate and oblivious forms of overworked and exhausted Backwhackers. Notwithstanding the damaging physical effects of these frays, a party triumph to the club was sure to bring a harvest of profitable and pleasing consequences; for no sooner had the smoke of battle cleared, and the Harp recovered of its benumbed and distracted senses, than every member of it became impressed with a calling to serve the American public under some position within the gifts and patronage of the newly elected candidates. This request of the Backwhackers for an office apiece, though embarrassing on account of the discrepancy between demand and supply, was complied with to an extent that exhibited the high appreciation their talents and genius were held in the community of which they formed a part. The organization of this club had a fine effect also to introduce some notable people among the inhabitants of the district, one or more of whom was on hand at the meetings to lend encouragement to the great reforms to which the Backwhackers had so commendably pledged themselves. The man of all others whose presence in the Harp excited the wildest enthusiasm was Mr. Thomas Blaize. The oratorical strong suit of Mr. Blaize was oppression; and he had a faculty of detecting it, and a talent for denouncing it. He discoursed eloquently of the oppressive operation of the American school laws, which prohibited the incorporation of the religion of the Harp with its studies, and the removal of this outrageous and unbearable oppression was one of the great reforms to be instituted by the Backwhacker Club.

There was another man who came frequently to the Harp, and who wound up the club and set it agoing like a clock—who reversed it and started it ahead, and stopped it like a piece of machinery. This man never condescended to waste his eloquence before the club. He simply announced what he wanted done, and matters political were adjusted accordingly. He had a quiet word or two out of his carriage window, and the Backwhackers standing by listened with a deference that told full well the character of his authority. This man, Mr. Roderick Rood, who visited the Harp with manners rather arbitrary and short, had withal great persuasion and eloquence, which he brought into service before the larger assemblages of American voters. Like his coadjutor, Mr. Blaize, he also had a dragon for the perpetual exercise of his oratorical lance; for as the acute perception of Mr. Blaize could detect a sinister purpose of oppression where another might not suspect, so the sagacious mind of Mr. Rood was constantly observing and bringing to notice how all the Anti-Backwhackers were bent on destroying the American Constitution. He seemed to have taken the Constitution to his heart with such a sentiment of veneration that any proposition to amend or alter it drew him out with the like effect of a red flag at a bull-fight. With the workings of this club, and a fair account of the doings of its presiding genius, a certain Mr. Tooney Madden, some of the subsequent chapters will be devoted. Let us say, however, that the political strain upon the Harp is not perpetual, and that during the dormant intervals of the Backwhacker Club it has other thoughts, and is diverted at times from its great work of reforming the common school system of America.

CHAPTER IV.

John Dale was an American by birth and had been educated in the common schools of the country. He had read much and was induced by comparison as well as a sense of patriotism to hold American ideas near his heart. He saw that the spirit of liberal government was in antagonism to church supremacy, and he believed that the unusual personal liberty of Americans was due, in great part, to the absence of ecclesiastical interference in the construction of their organic civil laws. He saw that the church, in its eager proselytism had always been blind to the progress of civil liberty, indifferent to the temporal comfort and contentment of man, and utterly careless of his struggle to acquire natural knowledge. He believed that the older division of the Christian Church, from its very nature, must always have a sadly disintegrating effect upon governments of men, because in its struggles to extend its dominion it would have no hesitation, if need be, to sacrifice the welfare of any civil organization, and its history, from first to last has been a succession of attempts to compel the surrender into its hands of every temporal appliance by which it could enlarge its boundary. He had a knowledge that the church alluded to would for ever hold every one of its members under paramount ties of allegiance, if necessary, against all obligations of patriotism. John Dale had sentiments, also, appertaining to matters of a general theological character, which he held quietly and never expressed with a chance of causing pain or acerbity; for instance, he believed that the church's doctrine of inherent human depravity was a debasing error, and that mankind, without ecclesiastical assistance were capable of achieving a glorious destiny. He held that in the present advanced state of knowledge a far greater average of moral excellence can be obtained by popular demonstrations of the influence of virtue on the happiness and prosperity of life than by the sectarian teachings of eternal rewards and punishments. He was inclined to bow down in the fullness of his admiration to those who, by the incentives of church discipline, had exalted themselves in the cultivation of virtue, but he felt that he was not mistaken in the belief, that the germs of goodness planted in each man's heart by his Maker could be as well stimulated and cherished to grow by secular as by sectarian cultivation. Had the mind of John Dale been less contemplative, and not so inclined to go down into the bottom of things, the dazzling splendor of the Roman Church and the constant exhibition of its benevolent and charitable acts would have captivated him to the extent at least of holding him an indifferent and passive witness to its slow and stealthy approaches toward the summit of its hope in America. On the contrary, he was much concerned to detect and have the unmistakable evidences before him of a certain ingeniously laid out line of political policy worked by the machinery of the church and aiming to subvert, first, an educational system, in his opinion, the best in the world, and then, having cleared away that obstruction, to change, in course of time the complexion of the government as announced in the openly avowed declarations of the priests and literati.

While the church in this country had taken no great pains to conceal its designs, which Americans for the most part were well apprised of, yet a general trust in the spread of enlightenment to retard priestly influence had rendered them indifferent to the struggle. John Dale had a different view of this matter. He saw the contest quietly going on with many surrounding conditions favorable to the church. He saw that a government careless and indifferent to all religious creeds, and organized with an idea of the greatest toleration had provided itself with no weapon of defence in so unexpected an assault, and that the jesuitical conclave emboldened by the absence of any power to suppress it, could select the point of approach most favorable, without fear of picket or guard. He beheld, too, the balance of voting power operating through the universal suffrage law, doing its potent work in the interests of this church, and he was possessed with misgivings of the ultimate result, more especially as the church was exhibiting everywhere an organized and persistent energy, with nothing in opposition but a fickle and divided public will, and was, moreover, radiant and smiling with the inward consciousness of success.

John Dale had taken an active part in political matters to the extent of choosing his candidates on high grounds and in an enthusiastic way aiding in their election. He had even assisted in the organization of the clubs, and he had expressed his political opinions before them on many occasions with directness and that degree of earnest feeling that comes only from a sincere and honest heart. He had thrown himself into this work impelled by a sense of duty and a conviction that public services of that nature were too often assumed by parties of questionable integrity, beside being a witness on several occasions to the grossest treachery of the public interest by the subordinate manipulators of the elections, he had taken hold of the business with a wish to assist in dispelling the odium that in one way and another had attached itself to such very important and necessary duty.

While a youth, and shortly after starting out in the struggle of life he had drifted into the service of the American Life Insurance Company, where he was engaged at his desk in the usual routine of duty a few days after the business of Mr. Crippen's will, when Mr. Roderick Rood quietly sauntered in and took a chair with the appearance of having sought a refuge out of the busy street for a little quiet reflection and rest. He had bestowed, on entering, a rather careless nod to Dale who had suffered no interruption from his presence, but had continued on in his clerical duties, not, however, without having recognized the lawyer whose reputation and appearance were well known about town. Mr. Rood had taken a document from his wallet and had looked over it leisurely from beginning to end and then had gone into a reverie for a while, when, finally catching a glance from Dale, he signified by a sign that he had business on hand, and casting his eyes upon the paper before him he read Dale's name in full from it which was responded to in a brief word by the Under Secretary, when the lawyer immediately removed his hat to a table adjacent and put himself in the position and attitude of being about to take a witness professionally.

"Please examine your record, Mr. Dale, for policy No. 1,083," said he.

"Policy No. 1,083 was extinguished by the death of the holder nearly six years ago," said Dale, after consulting one of the company's books."

"Will you oblige me by an account of the transaction as you find it recorded?"

"James Carruthers took out a life policy in favor of himself for twenty thousand dollars, and assigned it over in due form to one William Crippen, six days after its issue. This company received satisfactory proof of Mr. Carruther's death ten months thereafter, and it is shown here that the full amount of twenty thousand dollars was paid within thirty days of the proofs," said Dale.

"Paid to William Crippen," of course?"

"To William Crippen."

"The receipt of Mr. Crippen, then, with his signature in satisfaction of payment is on file."

"I have it in my hand, sir."

"Please allow me to examine it," said the lawyer, comparing the handwriting of Mr. Crippen in his receipt with that of his will, which he held in his hand.

"I'll trouble you to tell me, Mr. Dale, whether there are any other papers appertaining to the Carruthers' insurance within your reach?"

"Here is his application, sir."

"Which, if I remember the usual form of such a paper, records his age, nationality, the death rate of his relations, etc."

"Yes, sir, with the addition in our form of a description of his person."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the lawyer, with suppressed concern, "I'll take a look at it, if you please. "Is there anything else on record in connection?" inquired the lawyer, handing back the application."

"Yes, sir, I see here also a permit to travel over any of the States and Territories, and to engage in some occupations considered hazardous by this company, and not usually allowed by its rules."

"What occupation, for instance?"

"Mining with gunpowder," answered Dale.

"Will you tell me whether this risk was taken in your office, or by a solicitor outside?"

"It was taken in the office."

"You must have some recollection of the personal appearance of Carruthers, then?"

"He has passed entirely out of my mind," answered Dale, reflectively.

"I will not trouble you any further in this matter, Mr. Dale; but as the opportunity occurs I will say to you that you have become mixed up in this business in a singular manner, perhaps, providentially, to your great benefit. We shall see. Accident seems to have placed you in the way to perform the office of a subscribing witness to this very important will. Of course we would have preferred a person more in accord with its grand purpose and noble provisions, for I am told, although a very worthy person, you are not quite orthodox in your religious sentiments; but you are a young man yet,

sir, and are likely to change your opinions on devout matters. Your lack of attachment to the purposes of this will is a matter of regret to me, because there may arise a question—I mean by that to imply a bare possibility that a contest might occur on the competency of Mr. William Crippen at the time of the execution of his munificent and devotional bequest, in which case you would be, sir, a very important and entirely a disinterested witness for us. You are a young man, not lacking talent, and without doubt capable of achieving a high political position. I have it in my way, and it would afford me pleasure to do you great service. I can assist to put you, in course of time, into any prominent position a reasonable ambition might prompt you to aspire to. We stand ready to perform great services for you, sir, and it is not unreasonable that we should look for due consideration in return, and we require nothing of you which is not eminently laudable and worthy, and which any honest man could not promise and perform with his hand upon his heart and his thoughts upon his Maker."

John Dale had listened to this address with great interest, and a curiosity led him to inquire in an assumed, manner of deference, what was required of him in return for such promised favors.

"Nothing but this," said Roderick Rood, "you are to promise on your honor never to make any opposition to our religious faith, and never to put any obstruction in the way of our efforts toward the salvation of men; and if, in the course of your public duty, the grace of God should ever so enter your heart as to prompt you to assist in our great and holy work, our gratitude, and the favor of God will be sure to respond to your great profit. These remarks, Mr. Dale, are merely suggestive; please bestow some thought upon them. They are not designed to bring from you any expression at this time." Saying which, Roderick Rood arose and placed his hat on his head.

"You know," he added, as he made preparations to depart, "that we could, if we were provoked to do it, throw obstacles in your way that would render futile every effort you might make toward advancement, but don't by any means accept this as a threat, sir," added the lawyer, as he saw a shadow of indignation passing over Dale's face.

It was the pleasure of John Dale to make no expression of the feeling this interview had excited in his mind, and his politeness led him to nod in a pleasant way as Roderick Rood took his departure from the office, leaving him in a mood of intense reflection. He was neither flattered nor pleased by the words of the lawyer, and had already determined to make his position understood on the first opportunity by a written communication. Going back over the papers he had just been examining he scanned them carefully with increased interest, and coming to the recorded proofs of Carruthers' death he discovered a coincidence. The coincidence was, that James Carruthers, having a permission, granted of the company by his own request, to engage in mining with gunpowder, had died by the accident of a premature blast; and reading more closely the application he learned that Carruthers had been a married man and a book-keeper; that his family was long-lived, and that from the personal description given there was nothing notable in his appearance. It came to his mind now, that since Mr. Roder-

ick Rood had manifested a wish to know whether he could describe the looks of the holder of policy No. 1,083, he would make an effort to recollect him. He must have had two interviews with Carruthers; one to receive his application, and another to deliver his policy. All faces, however, except intimate ones, readily faded from his remembrance, and no amount of effort at the time would bring the face and form of James Carruthers to his mind. There came to him at intervals during the day, while over his books, the shadow flitting back and forth of a man that his memory was reaching for, but could not quite grapple. When the business of the office was over he remained at his desk and penned the following letter:

TO MR. RODERICK ROOD:

DEAR SIR:—I take this early opportunity to make known to you my determination upon matters alluded to in our brief interview. Believing that no amount of deliberation will change my convictions, I address you without hesitation or delay. I am indebted to you for an offer of service tending to my political advancement. I have not the slightest doubt of your ability to assist me in the manner you promised, and did I consent to accept the conditions imposed I could no doubt do the same bad acts that other recipients of your favors, in like circumstances, have done without your censure—my fealty to the interests of your church being unquestioned. For instance, I could put my hands into the public treasury arm-pit deep, and become a systematic thief of the public funds. I could banish all sense of honor and act in every way to the disparagement of the public good. I could violate every feeling of patriotism, and devote my public life to speculation and the furtherance of selfish and mercenary ends; and yet your people, having a knowledge of all that, but believing me true to their religious interests, would shout in my favor at election time, and vote to return me again to the position I had disgraced in preference to any abler and honest man, who had been too independent to accept your terms, and too enlightened and conscientious to further your purposes. Already the corrupting influence of your church in American politics is so apparent that it cannot be denied, and from this bad beginning it is well known that you are conspiring to strike even a deadlier blow at our free Government in your attempt to establish a system of sectarian schools under priestly control, to be sanctioned by the civil law and supported by the general tax, which movement, we are unblushingly told by your priests, is the first step toward their cherished project of amalgamating our American civil with your Latin ecclesiastical forms. Now, sir, no ambitious desires will induce me to make terms with an influence that has always had the blindest indifference to the spirit of human progress, and which, by its very nature, must be unsafe and treacherous in a Government it has no affinities with, and much traditional sentiment in opposition. In regard to my act of subscribing to the will of Mr. Crippen, I will candidly say to you that I have had a feeling of guilt since its occurrence. Overwhelmed by the exhibition of death, I put my name to the paper at the earnest solicitation of Father Scully in a mechanical, half-oblivious way, and I stand ready to repair the injury I may have done to anybody by that performance the moment I discover it.

Yours truly,

JOHN DALE.

This letter was deposited in the post-box with that sense of pure satisfaction felt by every act born of a good impulse. There was the feeling of a clear and cleanly conscience—a feeling in John Dale akin to his sensation of coming out of his bath with all the contamination washed away. Sitting in his room on the evening of that day, by a window facing the Golden

Gate, with the twilight surrounding him, and the thick fog blowing in from the ocean, he saw in his imagination the Unknown floating back from the sea on the tide of mist, with his white upturned face full of agony, as he had last seen it. With his memory struggling for the recollection of the holder of policy No. 1,083, the forms and faces of men were summoned to his mind's eye; men who had been at the office about the period of the issuance of this policy with enough attachment to his memory to be recovered and scrutinized with an effort. He got so far with the aid of his memoranda to remember some of the events of that very day; and, by bringing one and another of its transactions out of his forgetfulness, the spirit of James Carruthers appeared to rise out of the mist before him undefined and without shape, and he knew him only by a manner. He had, standing before the counter there, taken the open instrument of insurance from John Dale's hands on the day of its completion, and the manner of its reception by him, and his folding it away, came all at once vividly to his mind, James Carruthers, taking the paper in his hands, had first folded and creased it delicately and deliberately, and finished the operation by several rapid nervous slidings of his thumb and finger over its edge from corner to corner, and the act was rendered more noticeable by its left hand performance. All else but this persistently hid itself from his memory. But another form came fresh into his recollection, bright, distinct, and superlatively beautiful. Instead of an obscure shadow hiding its distinctness, it seemed to be surrounded with a halo of spiritual light. As often as his memory came to dwell on this fair vision he realized with a feeling of sadness the great deep gulf that separated him from it, and denied his approach.

CHAPTER V.

When the sun went down, the shadow of the high steeple stretched out over the roofs, and moved in its slow circle and gradually extending apex until it reached the entrance way of a house on the hill-side. Then, having pointed, finger-like, to the spot for a moment, it dissolved into the thicker shadows of the approaching night. The house, standing so significantly just within the circle of the church's shadow, bore the unkempt appearance on its outside of neglect. The sunlight reflected from its gable and roof a dingy surface of light colored and thoroughly desiccated powder from the abraded waste of the hill above, which, collecting day by day during the long rainless period, hung in flakes and drifts in the corners and angles. It was occupied by Mrs. Katie Finley, a widow and her four children, girls ranging from six to twelve years of age. Poverty's hard lines were observable within. Mrs. Finley having neither doubt nor misgivings of the mode and theory of reaching heaven taught by the priests, obeyed their commands and requirements with the proverbial religious servility of her race. Her heart, in its inherent goodness, was captured with the story and its images and commands of love and charity so ingeniously interwoven into the business of the church, and in her simplicity of heart and lack of knowledge she saw nothing of God beyond its jurisdiction. A priest was to her the most sublime spectacle of human elevation, and her life was a meek submission to the duties he taught her. Her son Terrence, who had lost an occupation in the death of his employer, the late Mr. Crippen, had been engaged, through the influence of Father Scully, to act as one of the attendants of a wealthy and devout family in their tour and pilgrimage to Rome. She was so overwhelmed with the honor thus conferred upon him that it made her forget for a time the heavy load of care that poverty had laid upon her. There was a hope in her mind that Terry might receive, at least, as much as a glance from the divine eyes of His Holiness, the Pope, and her simple mind rejoiced in this contemplation.

Ever since Mr. Terrence Finley, Sr., had been laid away in his grave, it appeared to have been his spirit's pleasure to call periodically on his widow in visions during her sleep, never saying a word, but expressing himself in the language of pantomime. Now Mrs. Katie Finley would have lost all the valuable hints of a husband experienced in two worlds, but for the services of the Reverend Father Dowd, whose knowledge appertaining to all these supernatural matters was so profound and complete that the signs or gestures of any spirit that ever appeared in a vision, or of any ghost that ever walked under the moon were as well understood by him as though it had given utterance in the most orthodox latin.

Had it been Father Dowd's misfortune to have sniffed in his infancy an atmosphere in some unbelieving and heretical quarter of the world, this faculty of his, from want of exercise and development, must have been lost to the world and Mrs. Finley. A considerate Providence, however, had placed him, during the greater part of his life among a people favored so highly of spectral visits and influences that his practice and observation had been ample enough to accomplish that wonderful understanding so gratefully acknowledged, and so often employed by his humble parishioners, Mrs. Katie Finley in particular. There is reason to believe that Father Dowd's practices in the line of his calling were more in accordance with the requirements of a community uncontaminated with the presence of any such unbelieving element as San Francisco contained. His birth, residence and education in Ireland, where nearly the whole people had so devotedly given themselves into the church's keeping, had taught him to administer the services of his mission with that vigor and original purity only attained in a land so uncorrupted in faith and so blest in church discipline. This good, old-fashioned Irish priest, of the Order of St. Ignatius, nothing daunted to witness the degenerate, hypercritical condition of the community he was in, would abate nothing of the privileges he had heretofore enjoyed, and in a brief period performed some of those inestimable services for his confiding people that are seldom vouchsafed out of the territory of the Roman Church.

Mrs. Katie Finley had been having these interesting visions of her departed husband for many a day, and consulting one and another of the Fathers in relation thereto, they had explained to her—and the unanimity of their opinions left no chance for doubt—that the spirit of Mr. Finley was in the embarrassing and unhappy dilemma of having not quite grace enough to pass St. Peter at the gate above, and a little too much to be taken in and eternally done for at the sulphurous pit below; but that, happily, his case, melancholy and desperate as it appeared, was not without a remedy; for although her dear departed could have saved himself all the unspeakable trouble and annoyance he encountered by a stricter observance of church rules and discipline during his natural life, yet, since he had not at any time wholly broken from the church, it would magnanimously undertake, for the trifle of a few dollars, to release him and send him on his way rejoicing. The affectionate widow had contributed from her hard earnings at divers times such small sums as would only secure to her departed the church specific in a minimum supply; in other words a very diminutive mass for the repose of Mr. Finley's soul, which, as might have been expected, only elevated him to an altitude so short of the mark that he had fallen back again as was apparent in the continuation of his nocturnal visits to his wife. It was at this period of Mrs. Finley's great trouble, when she met in consultation for the first time the skillful and learned Father Dowd, who fortunately discovered at once that the ceremonies she had secured for her husband's relief were of a character entirely too insignificant for the refractory case in hand, and he assured her, with confidence, that if she wanted the thing done well and effectually she must place her dependence upon a grand requiem high mass. So, scanting and saving, by slow degrees Mrs. Finley began hoarding

up the sum necessary to secure its performance. Meanwhile, in the Finley domestic circle were some extraordinary occurrences that tended to accelerate its maternal head in her grand purpose. The little twelve-year-old declaring one morning that she too had been haunted on the night previous by her father's shadow, and the matter being duly reported in detail to Father Dowd it was wisely interpreted by him that it was plainly an admonition to have the Sacrament of Confirmation bestowed upon the whole four children, which the mother proceeded at once to have done, after which, domestic matters went along smoothly enough for a week or two, until on a certain night the little eleven-year-old was also favored with the parental family shadow, which in turn being duly reported to Father Dowd, was pronounced an intimation that the catechism was neglected, and so in time the whole family, one after another, being periodically favored alike, it became plain to this priest's mind that the education of the children under the American school system was the very thing that was giving the late Mr. Finley's spirit such apprehension and annoyance, and that its uneasiness was as good evidence as could be wished for, that such a system of schooling was not approved by heaven. There is reason to believe, however, that if Mrs. Finley's culinary art had borne any comparison in point of perfection to her assiduity of church matters, a certain inference in the case of the late Mr. Finley's shadow must have been lost to science, which was, that pork pie compounded in her mode, had the remarkable effect after each bountiful indulgence by the family, of exciting the roving desire of Finley's spirit, but unfortunately that singular coincidence was never demonstrated to the troubled widow, and the late Mr. Finley's shadow kept oscillating back and forth until in time an interesting change came over the spirit of their dreams, and the absent son belonging to the pilgrim party put in an appearance in his father's place on a certain night following a hearty indulgence of the family relish. The good mother, fearing that something had gone wrong, made haste to obtain Father Dowd's opinion.

Until this interview with her spiritual adviser Mrs. Finley had rested in the calm satisfaction that no misfortune would be apt to come upon the pilgrims, whose purpose was so holy that it must avert the mishaps of life, but when she had expressed this happy conclusion of her mind to the Reverend Father, he explained that the great and conspicuous devotion of the pilgrim party would be likely to attract God's attention to such a degree, and to inspire such a love for them, that the occurrence of a shipwreck or railway accident might be instituted by Him for the sole purpose of bringing all, or a portion of them, to his admiring and affectionate bosom at once, and he furthermore assured her that if she wanted any consideration for her wishes in the matter—since her son's visionary appearance was ominous of some evil impending—she must perform some good service for the church without delay.

Now it happily came to the mind of the anxious mother, that there was a certain stray member of the fold who had been hanging around her with amatory symptoms, and who, by proper management, might be brought and delivered over to devotional duties under the tuition of the good

fathers, and that in doing this excellent piece of work for the Holy Church, its prayers and blessings must tend to avert any evil hanging over her son's head. So Mrs. Katie Finley immediately laid plans for the capture and surrender of this person into Father Dowd's hands.

It was one of the easiest things in the world to find the object of Mrs. Finley's sudden solicitude, for he tarried about a certain street corner in the business of looking out for jobs in the hand cart line. His two-wheeled vehicle occupying by sufferance the verge of the sidewalk, served remarkably to illustrate the elementary idea of a cart without a single modern mechanical attachment; for nothing was ever made to go on spokes with a more abbreviated combination of pieces. This contempt for the superfluous was so consistently carried out in all its parts that even the sign mark on its sides was clipped of a letter unneedful, and "Xpress" painted by some unsteady amateur artist told to the world that Barney Wobbles, its proprietor, was at the service of whoever had a package to carry. But moving the eye from Barney's cart to the attire of his person, the sense of curtailment was completely buried up in the waste folds of his voluminous garments; which opposite conditions were accounted for by the fact that his vestments came to him without cost from an over sized and large hearted patron, while every inch of his cart represented a cash value attained only by the exchange of his hard coin.

Between Barney's cart and himself there existed a certain barometrical condition, of which, having learned the key, any one could tell by a glance at the cart, the whereabouts of the owner and the probable acuteness of his perception at the moment, for just as sure as the shafts were up Barney was taking a view of the bright side of life in the adjacent corner grocery, and if the shafts were down, his weary frame was coiled up in an oblivious condition in the body of the vehicle. But appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, there was not a lazy hair in Barney's head, for during these apparently idle moments there was generating within him that amount of physical force required by the man and horse nature of his calling, and which once summoned from its latent state by a customer, made itself serviceable in a double quick step to any part of the city. The habit of being slowly wound up and ready to go off in a whiz was common also to Barney's intellectual nature, and when after a period of mental quietude a congenial idea got into his head he made the most of it. It was during one of these opportune conditions of Barney's mind, to accomodate a new idea and to do it the fullest justice, when Mrs. Katie Finley came along and advanced her suggestion. Quite likely it was the eloquence of Mrs. Finley's tongue and the soft insinuation of her manner that moved Barney to take a more serious view of devout matters than he had ever done before. The religious idea from her point of view seemed something new to him.

"Mr. Wobbles, there's a deal twixt you and good luck widout the blessing and prayers of the church," said the widow.

"Mistress Finley," said Barney, with a meek and defferential air, "it's your own good sinse and your swate manners that would put anyone on the coorse intil heaven."

"Have a mind of ray poor husband, rest his soul, and the unaisy condition he's in at the present moment, all for the neglect of church duties," said the widow, by way of admonition.

"And have'nt the fathers laid him yet," enquired Barney with tender concern.

"Sure they have not, and my heart's breaking wid the thoughts of it: Mr. Wobbles, you'd best take warning and attend better to the savin' of your own soul." Mrs. Finley uttered these words in tears, and Barney was melted into a sympathetic fervor. He slapped one hand on the crown of his head as an expression of high feeling, and then shoving his arms down deep in the capacious pockets of his coat, he bent himself toward the widow in an attitude of confidence.

"Mistress Finley," said he, "if there is one way bekknown to yeer that I could induce the Fathers to hist owld Terry's soul out of the uncomfortable place it's got into, mintion it."

"Indade then Mr. Wobbles if you were to go yoursel to Father Dowd and make confession and enter intil all the duties of a good christian man there's an ither soul beside your own would get the good of it. That's my opinion."

"Lave me alone for that, and go home to the childer," exclaimed Barney, shaking the widow's hand as a sign of the compact.

With his mind fairly running away with the portentious business in hand he went up soon thereafter into the house with the towering roof, and its shadow never after moved out of his path. The old contrivance with its subtle ways to attract gathered him in, and with its impressive manifestations so expanded the religious instinct in his breast, that before long Barney Wobbles had got himself burried head and ears in that rut in which many with far, brighter mind has traveled an entranced and paralyzed career. The effects of so constant and close contact with the machinery of the church upon the impetuous Barney inspired a zeal in him, very pleasant to witness by the good Father Dowd, into whose training he had placed himself; and the intensity of his religious fervor had come in a single week to such a pitch that going one morning to prayers, and finding himself too early for admission, he mounted to the first story window, in his impatience, and the circle described by his longitudinal coat tails as they disappeared from the outside view, marked his hasty and irrepressible course toward the shrine.

CHAPTER VI.

Whatever salutary influence Barney's capture may have had upon the fortune of her absent son, it served not to avert the painful calamity that befell this unhappy woman shortly thereafter. On a fatal week her children one after another were stricken with a malignant disease, and in less than a fortnight of illness two of them were carried away to their graves. The distress of the afflicted mother was heart rending. Her misfortune was the subject of much sympathy in the neighborhood, but the contagiousness of the disease almost isolated her in her deep sorrow. The spectacle of the two little coffins being borne slowly through the street, had attracted Dale's attention, and led him to make some enquiries of the case. With the new sentiment in his heart, the panorama of life within the line of his vision seemed to have underwent a change. Instead of that partial indifference to misery, whose universal presence induces us all to regard too lightly, he came now to make a note of distress, wherever he saw its sign. The shadows of life seemed to multiply enormously, as he began to mark them. He observed death and its melancholy surroundings, and approaches with a new interest, and the contemplation of this afflicted family aroused an impulse to assist them. When he came into their presence, the sight he beheld was pitiful in the extreme. The mother with two of her darlings gone, and the other two seemingly on the eve of passing away from her, would not be comforted. She was swaying her body back and forth, moaning with anguish. By a little observation and inquiry, John Dale discovered that the medical agencies so far brought to bear were of a very superficial kind. The simple woman had directed her chief efforts in the way of the children's recovery, by endeavoring to appease the wrath of God, who in accordance with her indoctrinated belief was venting his anger upon her for some lapse of duty. This view of her distressful case was corroborated by Father Dowd, and she beseechingly appealed to him to intercede in her behalf. This priest came to the sick room each day and went through his incantations with no benefit whatever, and believing the two remaining children about to follow their sisters, he administered only by prayer. After getting through with this solemn performance he walked out just as the evening shadows of the church spire fell upon the doorway of Mrs. Finley's humble abode, and as John Dale walked in with a physician whom he had summoned with the consent of the mother. The Doctor went directly to the couch of the little sufferers, and made a careful examination, after

which, he arose and surveyed the premises outside. He observed trickling down the face of the hill in the rear, a damp line of open sewage coming from half a dozen cheap dwellings above which as it sluggishly meandered along, fed a little green pool near by the well, and overflowed from it on its death dealing course.

"These children," said the Doctor, emphatically, "will die of a malignant typhoid fever, unless an immediate sanitary change is made in their behalf. With a reliable person to carry out my plans, I think they can be saved."

The mother, half senseless in her anguish, was moving about like one in a dream, and the hope expressed by the Doctor aroused her into the most extravagant expressions of gratitude. The Doctor's announcement raised Dale to an enthusiasm of sympathy and good will, and he offered his personal service in assistance.

"No more water from the well," began the Doctor. "The moist surface of decaying matter around the house must be covered six inches at least with fine, dry earth. The children must be immediately cleansed with tepid water, and sponged off every hour. Wine whey must be given as I shall direct. A teaspoonful of a diluted acid, such as I order from the druggist, must be administered with scrupulous exactness every two hours."

When the Doctor took his departure all his directions were being carried out with expedition under the supervision of Dale. The services of Barney Wobbles and his cart were brought into requisition in dumping dry soil over the yard, and the periods of dosing and bathing the children were noted by Dale, watch in hand, and pursued with the regularity of a time piece. Such close association with the suffering children increased his interest in them. The emaciated, wan, silent little figures, lying with their troubled faces gazing, half unconscious of the scenes about them, and submitting with patience to the manipulations prescribed, touched Dale's heart. He sat beside their bed, sponging their arms and faces at intervals, listening with pity to their short, hurried respiration, feeling the rapid beating of their pulses, and every now and then looking over, by the dim light of a shaded lamp, to observe with disappointment that their eyes were stretched wide open at the shadow that hung above them on the ceiling. Presently a cool wave of air fell upon him where he sat, as the door of the apartment swung open without sound. He turned in the direction, and saw moving toward him from the entrance, with a noiseless step, the youthful Sister of Charity, whom he had met before at the dying Mr. Crippin's bedside. He arose and bowed to her, and she acknowledged his presence with a quiet and self-possessed politeness. She went immediately to the mother, shook hands with her, while offering words of sympathy, then advanced to the children and kissed them; took off her hood, tied an apron about her waist, and went to work in the gentlest manner possible to arrange the little ones in a more comfortable position.

Sister Alice—for that was her name in religion—entered into conversation with her new made acquaintance with the ease and lack of restraint encouraged by the impregnable nature of her calling. The

seriousness of the occasion denying anything but the common place associated therewith, they were constrained to silence much of the time while watching by the bedside. A singular change was taking place in the manner of Sister Alice toward her companion. A new and strange influence seemed to be getting possession of her. It was unwelcomed, for a shade of anxiety and annoyance came occasionally over her face. From meeting John Dale's glance at first with composure and indifference, she now felt the glow of a hidden blush, which she was barely able to suppress by an effort of her will, when he turned his eyes upon her. A new sentiment was stealing into her heart, in spite of her attempts to fortify against it. After they had sat an hour by the bedside together, Dale leaned over the children, and uttering an exclamation of delight, called his fellow watcher to look upon them. They had fallen into a sound, natural sleep. Recognizing this as a very favorable symptom, and fearing to intrude too long on the society of Sister Alice, he took his leave, promising Katie Finley to return on the following evening, after which Sister Alice took her solitary place, annoyed with a mingling of discordant wishes and fears.

Sister Alice was born in the United States and her education had been strictly under the eye of the great party in interest, in one of its instituted schools. After her graduation she went out a little into the world beyond the influence of her teacher, and unavoidably at times she had gotten outside the atmosphere of her church. She had found there a prevailing sentiment that she was a stranger to, and in her timidity and distrust she hesitated to respond to it. She discovered that the sentiment among the new paths she commenced to tread, had an echo in every heart. It was the exultation of a free and happy people, and it was expressed in the never tiring praise and approval of the system of government under which she lived. At this period of her life, he too, would have been carried away with the enthusiasm and truth of this idea, but there was a mistrust in her mind; for although in her school experience, she had heard nothing of the nation positively condemned, yet she had caught a suspicion from her books and instructors that something about the government was wrong and unholy. A maturer mind and more discretion however, soon fitted her to receive those finishing touches of her education at the hands of her spiritual advisors, imparted in whispers among the nooks and corners of the church, wherein was explained to her the gross defect of the American system—its heretical foundation, and its shocking indifference to holy matters. Thus, listening to a foreign priest, the hope was born in her heart, that the government under which she lived might, by the grace of God, and through the influence and industry of all good catholic men and women, be so happily reformed as to be made an instrument under the church's control. So, among the shadows of the cloister was the first spark of genuine American patriotism darkened in the heart of sister Alice. That one so young and beautiful should have condemned herself to a life of seclusion and austerity is not strange, because she had been given into the church's keeping at a tender age, and all her natural love had been directed, so that it converged and accumulated upon an ideal object. That ideal was a manly image of physical and intellectual beauty. It

was the story of a man overflowing with love, whose heart was open to all alike, and having no especial attachment of one woman's love to cool the ardor of each admiring affinity. The story of his life was filled with chivalric deeds in a high sense. He bestowed a consideration for women above all ages except the present one. He tenderly folded children to his breast and blessed them. His life was made up of attributes and actions especially calculated to move a woman's heart, and there cannot be imagined for a last suffering scene, a picture of martyrdom more melting than his; nor more calculated to arouse a woman's active sympathy. To this picture, transformed by the church from a memory to a presence, and heightened in its effects by pathetic and melancholy surroundings, Sister Alice had poured out all the abundance of her love, until now it seemed to her that John Dale was sacrilegiously finding a place in her heart. Her interview with him on the following evening at Katie Finley's abode was like awakening to a new life.

The improved condition of the children tending to excite a cheerful mood and permitting unlimited discourse, she was regaled with a glimpse of the world from her new companion's standpoint. Tenderly careful not to lay so much as a feather weight upon the faith of Sister Alice, he communicated to her some of his hopeful views of mankind, and his belief in its inherent tendency to build up and multiply the virtues. He drew her a picture of modern society, with its many organizations of charity, its concerns for the perpetuation and increase of knowledge; and its universal efforts to stamp out individual oppression, and equalize the enjoyments of life in contrast with the ages past, of subjection, ignorance and misery. Accustomed to measure the value of all things by their bearing upon the church, and to estimate the goodness of society by the amount of its demand for priestly assistance, her teachers had obscured and belittled to her all those great events of the worlds progression. She had been taught to expect nothing but blank vanities outside her church. She was getting a glimpse in her conversations with Dale of a world that was strange to her—a world filled with a multitude of silent and unostentatious charities, fostered by the natural and spontaneous impulse, and compared to which the wide spread efforts of her society to assuage the pains and sorrows of life sank into insignificance. She had been like one whose mind had been shut in and controlled by mesmeric hands, and alternately terrified and delighted by unreal fancies—either a nightmare or a paradise. As being intolerable, and chiefly interesting as a battle ground and field of conquest, between these two imaginatively elaborated extremes, she was allowed the merest glance only of her own material world. Involved in a perpetual shadow, without hope of brightness until her celestial birth, gleams of sunshine seemed prematurely breaking in upon her. The austere and capricious God, whose beneficence she had been entreating with a corrosion of her senses, seemed transformed by her more enlightened view of his manifestations, into a being of never varying benevolence and love.

Yet the faith of sister Alice was not shaken in these long, blissful interchanges of sentiment with her new friend, and when late on the third evening John Dale was about to take his leave, happy in the anticipation of meet-

ing her at least once more in the sick apartment, she knew it was their last interview. Before the shadow of the church spire would again sweep over the door of Katie Finley's house, Father Scully would listen with close ear to her whisperings. He had been her confessor for a long period. He had known her every hope before it was half formed, and was master of her thoughts and secrets. Under his instructions, and with his assistance she had been moulded into the service of the church. She would tell him in blushes and with tremulous voice, that sitting there in company with John Dale her heart of its own volition, seemed to go out and cling to him. That in spite of her solemn vows a strange sentiment had stolen its way to her. That it seemed somehow he had so become a part of herself that his pleasures and pains would hereafter, as long as she lived, concern her. Father Scully would interpret all this to be the subtle intrigues of an evil spirit, and condemn her to a pennance of fasting and prayers. And so, when John Dale bade Sister Alice good night and closed the door behind him, she stooped down on her knees to watch through a crevasse in the shutter his receding form under the street lights, and she felt, when he disappeared in the darkness, that all she had ever tasted of heaven on earth, had departed never to return. When he came back on the following evening the speedily approaching health of the children, and the brighter aspect of the mother, with all her heartfelt expressions of gratitude, failed to make up for the absence which full upon him like the grief for one gone to the tomb.

[To be continued in parts.]







